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ABSTRACT

A survey of the status of language usage in Lebanon begins with an overview of the status and usage of Arabic, the official language, and three languages that are much less commonly used as native languages but are commercially and administratively significant: French, English, and Armenian. A matrix follows that rates these four languages on: (1) their usage rating using State Department classifications; (2) increase and decrease trends by the year 2000; (3) chief of state use in addressing the populace; (4) use in armed forces, government, court, and diplomatic communications, written and oral; (5) use as a language of instruction or required language in higher education, on the secondary and elementary levels, and in adult education; (6) use in the popular press, radio and television broadcasting, and film; (7) business and professional use, written and oral; (8) use in intellectual circles; (9) the alphabet situation; (10) the status of indigenous literature; (12) use in public signs and notices, and (12) the availability of instructional materials and dictionaries in the native languages for use in English as a second language. Explanatory notes give the number and population percentages using the languages, the type of alphabet used, and specific instructional materials titles. A selected bibliography is also included. (MSE)

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Language/Area Reference Center

COUNTRY STATUS REPORT:

LEBANON

June 1984

Prepared by:

Margaret McFerren

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June, 1984
Lebanon - 1, Overview

With independence from France in 1943, Arabic became the sole official language of Lebanon and has since been used almost exclusively in the government, the courts, the armed forces (i.e., the Lebanese army and sectarian militias), and in official signs and public notices. The other languages examined in the country status report are French, English and Armenian, not for numbers of native speakers (which are quite small), but for their importance in education, publishing and commerce.

There is no official policy with regards to education as the Constitution (Article 10) guarantees the right of religious and ethnic communities to develop their own private systems. As a result of this policy, there are both anglophone and francophone private systems, Lebanese public (official) schools and traditional Islamic schools. The private schools are Arabic-French or Arabic-English medium, with the required study of one foreign language. The public, official schools have been Arabic-medium with French-medium courses in Science and Math. A new, all Arabic-medium system is being tried in the public schools, however. Also in the private category are the Armenian schools with Armenian-, Arabic-and usually French-medium courses. Those students fortunate enough to attend private schools are usually trilingual, while students of the public schools are either monolingual, or not as proficient in the use of second and third languages as their privately-educated peers. Higher education is available in Arabic, French, English, or Armenian with English.

The popular press in Lebanon is overwhelmingly Arabic language, with important dailies, weeklies and periodicals in English, French and Armenian. National, private and clandestine radio broadcasts are mainly in Arabic (Lebanese dialect) with some French, English, and Armenian. Lebanese-produced films and television programs are either in Lebanese dialect (for home consumption) or Modern Standard Arabic (for the Arab world at large). A wide variety of foreign films and television programs are available, with subtitles or without.

A commonly-held myth concerning language use in Lebanon holds that French is the language of culture, English the language of business and commerce, and Arabic the language of public administration alone. These generalizations appear to be oversimplified and inaccurate. While it is true that there exists a substantial body of Lebanese literature in French, it does not overshadow in importance the great body of literature in Arabic. In business and commerce, English French and Arabic are all very important languages, because of Lebanon's role since the 1960's as a strategic link between the West and the fast-developing Arab hinterland.

Lebanon has been described as a mosaic society, a culturally pluralistic entity whose independent history has been marred by the unnatural fusion of different cultures into one nation. On the contrary, in spite of nine years of civil strife, it is clear that the Lebanese share a common culture which revolves more than any single factor around the use of the Lebanese dialect of Arabic. In reality, Lebanon's problems are not the result of cultural, but social pluralism: a complex and intricate mix of sectarian loyalties, isolationist/nationalistic tendencies and vast socioeconomic differentials with the Christians on the top, the Druzes in the middle, the Sunnis around the bottom, and the Shiis at the very bottom. The issues of language policy and language use in Lebanon function within this framework.

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Lebaron - 2, Language Use Matrix

LEBANON

Languages

Factoids	Arabic	French	English	Armenian
1. Usage rating*	1	3	3	5
2. Increase/decrease	?	?	?	?
3. Chief of State use?	1	0	0	0
4. Armed Forces/written	1	0	0	0
5. Armed Forces/oral	1	0	0	0
6. Government/written	1	0	0	0
7. Government/oral, national	1	0	0	0
8. Government/oral, local	1	0	0	0
9. Court/written	1	0	0	0
10. Court/oral	1	0	0	0
11. Diplomatic use?	1	1	1	0
12. Higher education	1	1	1	?
13. Higher ed: required?	1	0	1	?
14. Secondary education	1	1	1	1
15. Secondary: required?	1	1	1	1
16. Primary education	1	1	1	1
17. Primary: required?	1	1	1	1
18. Adult education	?	?	?	?
19. Popular press use	1	2	2	3
20. Transmission across borders?	1	1	1	0
21. Use in radio broadcasting	1	2	1	2
22. Use in TV broadcasting	2	2	2	0
23. Use in film	1	2	2	0
24. Business/professional/written	2	2	2	0
25. Business/professional/oral	1	2	2	3
26. Use in intellectual circles	1	1	1	1
27. Alphabet situation*	1	1	1	1
28. Status of literature	1	2	2	1
29. Use in signs?	1	0	0	0
30. Teaching materials*	2	-	-	2
31. Bilingual dictionaries*	2	-	-	2

Notes:

Matrix figures are explained on following pages

? = information unavailable within time frame of project

- = not applicable

* = footnotes on following pages

FOOTNOTES

1. 1984 ESTIMATES, NUMBERS OF NATIVE SPEAKERS

Language	Number of native speakers	% Population
Arabic	1,560,000 - 2,100,000	60% - 80%
Armenian	169,000	6.5%
French	-	-
English	-	-

27. TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

Language	Alphabet(s)
Arabic	Arabic
Armenian	Armenian, Roman
French	Roman
English	Roman

30. TEACHING MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Language	Texts
Arabic (Lebanese)	McLoughlin, Leslie J. Colloquial Arabic (Levantine) (Colloquial Series). London, England and Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982. . A Course in Colloquial Arabic. Beirut, Lebanon: Librairie du Liban, 1974. Harb, Hadia H. An Intermediate Colloquial Arabic Course. Beirut, Lebanon: Librairie du Liban, 1973.
Arabic (Modern Standard)	Abboud, Peter F. et al. Elementary Modern Standard Arabic, Parts I and II. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Department of Near Eastern and North African Studies, 1975-76. . Modern Standard Arabic; Intermediate Level: Parts I-III. Ann Arbor, MI: Department of Near Eastern and North African Studies, 197. Azmi, Sanaa and Belkacem Baccouche. Conversations in Modern Standard Arabic. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984.

Language	Texts
Armenian	Afarian, Krikor. I Am Learning Armenian. Beirut, Lebanon: Shirak Press, 1971.
	Andonian, Hagop. Modern Armenian. New York, NY: Armenian General Benevolent Union of America, 1974.
	Bardakjian, Kevork B. and Robert W. Thompson. A Textbook of Modern Western Armenian. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1977.

31. DICTIONARIES FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Language	Text
Armenian	Adjemian, B. B. English-Armenian Dictionary. Beirut, Lebanon: Doniguian and Sons Publishing House, 1953.
	Kouyoumdjian, Mesrob G. A Practical Dictionary for Adults: Armenian-English/English-Armenian. Cairo, Egypt: Vosguedar Press, 1973.
	Kouyoumdjian, Mesrob G. New Pocket Dictionary English-Armenian/Armenian-English. Beirut, Lebanon: Shirag Publishing House, 1977.
	The English-Armenian/Armenian-English Modern Dictionary. Beirut, Lebanon: Doniguian and Sons Publishing House, 1976-78.
Arabic (Modern Standard)	al-Ba'albaki, Munir. Al-Mawrid. A Modern English-Arabic Dictionary, 16th ed. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-'Ilm lil Mabayin, 1982.
	Wehr, Hans. Arabic-English Dictionary. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, 1977.
	al-Karmi, Hasan S. Al-Manar; English-Arabic Dictionary. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1972.

31. DICTIONARIES FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS, cont.

Languages	Texts
Arabic (Lebanese)	Cameron, D.A., comp. An Arabic-English Dictionary, containing both classical and colloquial vocabulary commonly used in Syria, Lebanon and Sudan. Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1979.
	Nasr, Raja T. An English-Colloquial Arabic Dictionary. Beirut, Lebanon: Librairie du Liban, 1972.
	Freyha, A.K. Dictionary of Non-Classical Vocables in The Spoken Arabic of Lebanon (Oriental Series #19). Beirut, Lebanon: American University of Beirut, 1947.

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Hartwig, Charles W. "France and The Lebanese Conflict," Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. III, No. 1, Fall, 1979, pp. 78-83.

Khalaf, Saher. Litterature Libanaise de Langue Francaise. Ottawa, Canada: Editions Naaman, 1974.

Kloss, Heinz (ed). Linguistic Composition of The Nations of The World, Vol. 1, "Central and Western South Asia". Quebec: Les Presses de l'Universite Laval, 1974.

Massialas, Byron G. and Samir Ahmed Jarrar. Education in The Arab World. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983.

Naaman, Abdallah. Le Francais au Liban; Essai Sociolinguistique. Paris: Editions Naaman, 1979.

Nakhle, Wehbe and Adnan El-Amine. Systeme d'Enseignement et Division Sociale au Liban. Paris: Editions Le Sycomore, 1980.

Nasr, Nafhat and Monte Palmer. "Alientation and Political Participation in Lebanon," International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 8, October, 1977, pp. 493-516.

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Starr, Paul D. "Ethnic Categories and Identifications in Lebanon," Urban Life, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1978, 111-142.

The Middle East and North Africa, 1983-84. London: Europa Publications, Ltd., 1984.

World Communications. Paris: UNESCO Press, 1975.

Zagorin, Adam. "A House Divided," Foreign Policy, no. 48, Fall, 1982, 111-21.

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - a

1. Usage rating, using the State Department classifications
   1: Official language, most widely used.
   2: Official language, not most widely used.
   3: Widely used language, but not official. (Over 10% of population)
   4: Unofficial language used by significant minority (but less than 3)
   5: Unofficial language used by influential minority
   FOOTNOTE: NUMBERS OF SPEAKERS, PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

2. Increase/decrease trends by the year 2000
   1: Number of native speakers will increase in proportion
   2: Number of native speakers will remain proportionally constant
   3: Number of native speakers will decrease in proportion

3. Chief of State use, in addressing populace: YES (1) NO (0)

4. Armed Forces written communications
   1: Only language used in official communiques
   2: One of the languages used in official communiques
   0: Not used in official communiques

5. Armed Forces oral communications
   1: Used on all levels
   2: Used among officers only
   3: Used among multi-lingual NCO's and troops
   4: Used among monolingual troops only
   0: Not used

6. Written government communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used in official communications

7. Oral government communications/national level
   1: Official language spoken in national assembly
   2: One of the official languages spoken in national assembly
   0: Not used in government

8. Oral government communications/local level
   1: Official language in local government
   2: One of the official languages used in local government
   3: Allowed in local government proceedings, translated into official language
   0: Not used in local government

9. Court use in written communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - b

10. Court use in oral communications
    1: Only official language used in court
    2: One of the official languages used in court
    3: Allowed in courts, translated into official language(s)
    0: Not used in courts

11. Diplomatic use in notes to other countries: YES (1) NO (0)

12. Use in higher education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used

13. Language taught as subject in required courses in higher education:
    YES (1) NO (0)

14. Use in secondary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

15. Language taught as subject in required courses on secondary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

16. Use in primary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

17. Language taught as subject in required courses on primary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

18. Language use in adult education
    1: Used in oral and written technical instruction
    2: Used in oral and written life skills instruction
    3: Used in oral life skills instruction
    4: Used in literacy classes only
    0: Not used in adult informal education

19. Language use in popular press
    1: Used in publications throughout country
    2: Used in centrally-based publications with national distribution
    3: Used only in regional and local publications
    4: Used in clandestine publications only
    0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - c

20. Language used in radio/TV transmission across national borders?
YES (1) NO (0)

21. Language use in radio broadcasting
1: Language used broadcasting thoughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national broadcasts
3: Language used in local broadcasting only
3: Language used in clandestine broadcasting only
0: Language not used in radio broadcasting

22. Language use in TV broadcasting
1: Language used in telecasting throughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national telecasting
3: Language used regional and local telecasting only
0: Language not used in TV

23. Language use in film
1: Language used in indigenous film-making
2: Foreign-language films dubbed/subtitled into language
0: Language not used in films

24. Business/Professional use - written
1: Sole official language in business and professional communications
2: One of the official languages in business and professional communication
0: Not used

25. Business/Professional use - oral
1: Used in trade and commerce throughout country
2: Used in national trade and commerce only
3: Used only in local trade and commerce

26. Language use in intellectual circles
1: Language used in indigenous scholarly publications
2: Language used in formal scholarly discussion
0: Language not used

27. Alphabet situation
1: Established standardized alphabet exists.
2: Alphabet developed, no standardization
3: Competing alphabets exist
0: No alphabet exists
FOOTNOTE: TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

28. Status of indigenous literature
1: Established written tradition exists
2: Literature tradition emerging
3: Popular literature exists
0: No written literature exists

29. Language used in official public signs, notices: YES (1) NO (0)

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - d

30. Teaching materials for English speakers
    1: Wide range of teaching materials exists
    2: Narrow range of teaching materials exists
    0: No teaching materials exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

31. Dictionaries for English speakers
    1: Wide range of bilingual dictionaries exists
    2: Narrow range of dictionaries exists
    0: No dictionaries exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY